Chapter-IV

BUILDING DEMOCRACY IN IRAQ

“This is a major step forward in achieving our objective…… We are committed to a strategic goal of a free Iraq that is democratic, that can govern itself, defend itself and sustain itself. A country that will be an ally in the war on terror and a country that will set such a powerful example to others in the region, whether they live in Iran or Syria.”

-- George W. Bush

Historically, Iraq was never a democracy and democratic election was completely alien to Iraqi citizens. President George W. Bush, in the midst of his determined fight against Islamic extremism and terrorism, militarily intervened in Iraq and later undertook a difficult project of building democracy in that country. Significantly, he justified military intervention in Iraq by saying that it was an effort “to liberate Iraqi people”. After the so called liberation of Iraqi people from the clutch of Saddam Hussein’s dictatorial regime, President Bush apparently desired to bring liberty to Iraqi citizens by initiating a process of democratic institution building.

Was President Bush trying to force the Iraqi people to be free? In fact, the very act of military action to remove the Saddam regime raised many questions based on principle of democracy and ethics.

Moral Views:

It is a good thing to promote change around the world so that people do not have to suffer under tyrannical and unjust governments. It is a bad thing to have millions of people suffering from poverty and oppression as virtual slaves to the leaders of some political regime. The person who would ignore the suffering in
Iraq, Darfur, and North Korea, turns his back on millions of people whose one and only life was destroyed can longer be called Human. When the violence becomes so loud then the victim becomes an annoyance.

These are the things that can be applied to the case of Iraq under Saddam Hussein’s regime. Almost every Iraqi was in favor of devoting significant effort to removing Saddam Hussein from power because innocent people were suffering and they would never be able to get back what they lost. In this case this war may be called “Just War”. According to Michelle Malkin, “The ‘Just War’ theology is very clear that war may be “Just” when it is waged to ultimately spare more lives than it takes, to stop an inexorable advancement of evil” (Malkin 2007). Saddam Hussein was considered an evil person. Bringing down an evil person is a good thing; and being the person to do so is heroic.

However, even though Iraqi people favored the principle of eliminating tyranny, they were also against Bush’s invasion of Iraq. It was may be the justification of invading Iraq was not convincing. As Arthur Schlesinger Jr. said, “The most forceful argument for going to war is helping the Iraqi people. George Bush was totally against nation building. And I don’t see any sign of change in that” (Massing 2003). There are two reasons for objecting to the invasion.

Reason 1, A Matter of Competence:

By 2003, President Bush had already proved himself to be an inexperienced, American President, particularly in foreign affairs. His unilateral withdrawal from the Anti Ballistic Missile Treaty, the ending of talks with North Korea, and pulling out of Kyoto Protocol, were all major foreign policy blunders (Malone & Khong 2003). The fault was how he handled these events making unilateral decisions that stunned and angered the rest of the world. In the modern age it is realized that even the lone super power need friends.
The difference between a proficient individual and an arrogant leader rests largely in one’s ability to anticipate what could go wrong and either prevent it or mitigate the harm done. Arrogant leaders tend to think that they already know everything. Their idea of reason is their perception towards their own empirical knowledge. But reality is annoyingly unforgiving. It has no qualms against destroying life, health, and well being when fools give it an opportunity to do so. Britain’s 19th-century Foreign Secretary Lord Palmerston famously observed, “We have no eternal allies, and we have no perpetual enemies. Our interests are eternal and perpetual, and those interests it is our duty to follow” (Cullinan 2003). President Bush apparently followed this philosophy.

One example of George W. Bush’s questionable leadership comes from the fact that any ordinary person could see that President Bush would be charged with attacking Iraq for the oil. Allowing the enemy to have this propaganda, meant that it would be easier for them to consolidate the power to fight the imperialist aggressor. In failing to deal with this issue, President Bush made the United States weaker, and its enemies stronger.

President Bush could have easily demonstrated that he was taking the moral high ground by announcing that Iraqi oil would be handled by an impartial unilateral commission and that the United States would not be a member. Certainly, some Muslims would still assert some sort of conspiracy. However, there would be a segment of the population who then would have been more sympathetic and supportive of the United States than they would have otherwise been.

Reason 2, A Matter of Principle:

George W. Bush’s invasion of Iraq was not only counterproductive, but also against the basic moral principles. There is a right to do violence against those who aggress
against innocent people. However, given the destructive nature of violence, and the
tendency for people to ‘rationalize’ evil by conceiving of it as good, it is a right that
must be restrained by the institutions and principles of justice.

The right to self-defense is not a right to kill anybody who might, possibly,
some day in the future, be conceived of as trying to kill an innocent person. In
arguing for the invasion of Iraq, Bush argued for a pre-emptive invasion of a
sovereign state that posed no immediate threat to the United States. As Richard J.
Neuhaus said, “War, if it is just, is not an option chosen but a duty imposed”
(Neuhaus 2005). We can imagine living in a community where the law stated that
killing somebody was legal as long as the killer believed that the person he killed
might be plotting some act of violence. This kind of society is guaranteed to be
drenched in blood. All nations of the world governed by the principle that the mere
suspicion of the possibility of future attacks by somebody cannot justify an attack;
this can be an excuse for unending war.

If one wants to protect innocent people from harm, one needs to uphold and
defend those institutions and moral principles that are designed to inhibit violence.
The moral prohibition on pre-emptive violence is justified precisely because, with
such a prohibition, we can reduce the number of people who get killed for little or
no reasons. The world would be a better place if these situations did not take place.
According to Richard J. Neuhaus, “The survival of liberty in our land increasingly
depends on the success of liberty in other lands. The best hope for peace in our
world is the expansion of freedom in the entire world” (Neuhaus 2005).

Another moral principle designed to preserve peace says that, except in the
case of immediate genuine self-defense, there is a moral duty to appeal to a neutral
third party to judge the merits of the case. The idea of a court system is not just
some quaint style or fashion that people adopted for a time. It is a moral rule
adopted precisely because the option is unrestrained acts of violence among people who think that they have been wronged by their neighbors. People have a bad habit of pretending that they have been wronged when they have not, and of thinking that the wrongs they inflict on others are justified. To avoid the unending bloodbath that this tendency can create, people long ago saw the wisdom of saying, “Take your case to the judge, and let him decide.” It is better than living in a perpetual state of war.

In March 2003, the United States was not under imminent threat. The case for ‘self-defense’ was largely the result of conveniently keeping the evidence so as to construct an imaginary pretense for war. There was time for the United States to find and present its case to a neutral third party to make sure that it actually had a case. Ignoring this rule and allowing countries to take resolve their differences ‘on the street’ is as dangerous as creating a community where citizens can opt to avoid the courts and settle their differences on the streets through bloodshed. By ignoring these moral principles by working to destroy freedoms and obligations the Bush Administration has perhaps made the world worse than it would have otherwise been. However, there is little doubt that the US led coalition forces engineered a process of institution building that would make Iraqi decision-making and domestic politics relatively more democratic.

Until the United States toppled Saddam Hussein’s ruthless regime in March 2003, the Ba’ath party had dominated Iraq for over thirty years. Furthermore, Iraq’s neighborhood remains a stronghold of autocracy and authoritarianism that has proven very resistant to democratic reform. These facts alone would tend to deter outside powers from grand plans of democratization, but the United States endeavored to construct the Arab world’s first liberal, pro-Western democracy. While much attention in the American press and academic world focused on
uncovering the true motivations for this bold mission, an equally interesting and important question was how the goal of democratization would actually be accomplished. To learn anything from the US experience in Iraq about the genesis and survival of democracy, it is important to examine what ideas about democratization were applied and how they fared. The experience in Iraq was discredited democratic universalism as a useful way to understand democratization. Shortly after Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) deposed Saddam Hussein’s regime in April 2003, the Bush Administration declared the end of the US military occupation. Then it got a task to complete the new constitution and the holding of national elections, which was expected to take two years. However, prominent Iraqis agitated for a rapid restoration of sovereignty. The Bush Administration returned sovereignty to an appointed Iraqi government on June 28, 2004, with a new government and a permanent constitution to be voted on thereafter. The elections were provided for in a Transitional Administrative Law (TAL), signed on March 8, 2004.3

The Election Planning and Process:

After 35 years of dictatorship, Iraqis embraced a political process emphasizing compromise and coalition. They successfully held elections and drawn up a constitution. More than eight million Iraqis braved bombs and bullets to vote on January 30, 2005, in Iraq’s first free elections in a half-century. On September 23, 2003 President George W. Bush praised the Iraqi people from the White House, declaring, “In great numbers, and under great risk, Iraqis have shown their commitment to democracy. By participating in free elections, the Iraqi people have firmly rejected the anti democratic ideology of terrorists” (Bush 2005). That

assertion reflected from the President’s notion that a democratic Iraq could serve as model throughout the Muslim world. In fact, Iraq could be something of a democratic domino (Rice, 2003). The official American effort to spread democracy to Iraq and implement democratic governance programs around the world had four principal objective: to strengthen the rule of law and respect for human rights, to develop open and competitive political processes, to foster the development of a politically active civil society, and to promote more transparent and accountable government institutions (Karatnycky 2001). But in subsequent weeks, talks bogged down, first over the formation of the government and then over the framing of a constitution.

In June 2004, the United Nations formed Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq (IECI); consisting of eight members nominated by notables from around Iraq, to run the election process (United Nations 2007). Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) Orders-92, issued on May 31, 2004, just before the handover of sovereignty by the US to an interim Iraqi government on June 28, 2004, provided for voting by Proportional Representation. Under that system, voters were supposed to choose among competing political entities like a party, a coalition of parties, or an individual running as an independent. Seats in the National Assembly and the Provincial Assemblies were allocated in proportion to the population, which was shown in certain list. Any candidate or party that obtained at least 1/275 of the vote or about 31,000 votes could obtain a seat. Some criticized this system as precluding the possibility of delayed elections in insecure areas and likely to favor well-established parties (Diamond 2004). Some said this system was the easiest to administer in a short time frame. Under IECI rules, a woman candidate could occupy every third position on electoral lists in order to meet the TAL’s goal for at least 25% female membership in the new Assembly.
Under an Iraqi decision announced on November 4, 2004, Iraqis abroad, estimated at about 1.2 million, were eligible to vote as well. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) was tapped to run the “Out-of-Country Voting” (OCV) program (Nettnin 2007). The UN electoral advisers opposed OCV because of the complexity of the task, as well as the expense. However, OCV did take place in 14 countries. The countries where this voting took place were Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Iran, Jordan, Netherlands, Sweden, Syria, Turkey, UAE, Britain, and the United States. About 275,000 Iraqi expatriates including dual citizens and anyone, who could demonstrate that their father was Iraqi, registered to vote.

Inside Iraq, registration of voters, political parties and candidates were held from November 1 to December 15, 2004. Voter lists were based on ration card lists containing about 14 million names, and voters needed to be at least 18 years old. Voters were not needed to register formally for voting, but they had the opportunity to verify or correct personal information on file at 550 food ration distribution points around Iraq. Each political party or candidate was required to obtain 500 signatures from eligible voters and pay about $5,000 to be registered. There were about 5,200 polling centers on Election Day and each center housed several polling stations. About 6,000 Iraqis staffed the branches of the IECI in each province, and 200,000 Iraqis staffed polling places on Election Day (United Nations 2007).

The elections were held on January 30, 2005. These were for a 275-seat National Assembly, and for a provincial assembly in each of Iraq’s 18 provinces having 41 seats each, 51 for Baghdad; and for a Kurdistan regional assembly has 111 seats. Results were released on February 13, 2005. The elected National Assembly started functioning on March 16, and formed “Presidency Council,”
consisting of a president and two deputy presidents. The Presidency Council then got two weeks to choose a prime minister by consensus. The Prime Minister got one month to recommend his cabinet and obtained Assembly confirmation. Cabinet ministers could be persons not elected to the Assembly. The Prime Minister and his cabinet were subject to confirmation by a majority vote in the Assembly.

The National Assembly drafted a Constitution, which was put to a national vote on October 15, 2005. The TAL allowed two thirds of the voters in any three Iraqi provinces to veto the constitution, essentially giving every major community like Kurds, Sunnis, or Shiites the authority to reject the drafted Constitution. However, the permanent Constitution was approved in the referendum, and the elections for a permanent government in Iraq took place on December 15, 2005.

The elections were held under a list system, whereby voters chose from a list of parties and coalitions. 230 seats were apportioned among Iraq’s 18 governorates based on the number of registered voters in each as of the January 2005 elections, including 59 seats for Baghdad Governorate (Government of Iraq 2007). The seats within each governorate were allocated to lists through a system of Proportional Representation. An additional 45 compensatory seats were allocated to those parties whose percentage of the total national vote including out of country votes exceeded the percentage of the 275 total seats that had been allocated. Women were required to occupy 25% of the 275 seats (BBC 2005). The changes in the voting system gave more weight to Arab Sunni voters, who were in majority in several provinces, so that these provinces could get mostly Sunni Arab representatives. The nationwide vote of the previous election meant that the low voter turnout among Sunni Arabs was overwhelmed by the high turnout of the Arab Shiites and the mostly Sunni Kurds. Arab Sunni parties withdrew from the elections so late that
they could not be removed from the voting lists. The election was boycotted by most Sunni Arabs. Turnout for the election was reported to be high, at 70%. The White House was encouraged by the relatively low levels of violence during polling (Steele 2005), with some insurgent groups making good on a promised Election Day moratorium on attacks, even going so far as to guard the voters from attack (Knickmeyer & Finer 2005). President Bush then frequently began to point out that the Iraqi election was a sign of progress in rebuilding the society.

**Conducting Election:**

Whether Iraq was secure enough to conduct a legitimate election was an issue under nearly constant review. Four provinces with Sunni Arabs majority Anbar, Nineveh, Salahuddin, and Baghdad in which insurgents were most active were the main concern for interim Iraqi Authority. In December 2004, President Bush stated that a postponement of election would represent a victory for the insurgents and thus elections should proceed as scheduled. Seventeen parties of mainly Sunni Arab maintained the US commitment to the election schedule despite a petition for postponement.

Due to law and order problem, and Sunni Arab perception of their inevitable election defeat, voters’ interest on election was low in the restive Sunni areas (Vick 2004). Prior to the Election Day, many members of IECI local branches in these areas resigned due to insurgent intimidation. Insurgents also repeatedly targeted polling stations and threatened to kill anyone who voted. In an effort to provide security to restive cities for the vote, the US forces conducted numerous counter-insurgency operations for four months prior to the vote, including a November 2004 operation to end insurgent control of Fallujah. The US force levels in Iraq rose to 150,000 from the earlier level of about 140,000 (Katzman 2005). Braced for the threatened political violence, polling centers were guarded that day.
by approximately 130,000 Iraqi security forces, with US forces close by for back-up and quick reaction. Two days prior to Election Day, all vehicle traffic was banned, and Iraq’s borders were closed. Many polling locations were not announced until a few days prior to Election Day.

Security concerns also affected the ability of the United Nations to assist Iraq’s election processes. Iraqi officials complained that the UN contingent in Iraq included only 19 election specialists out of a hundred-member team. There were another 12 UN election specialists based in Jordan, who were involved in the effort. In order to bolster the UN role in the election, the US officials allowed troop deployment by other nations for protection of UN contingent (United Nations 2004). Fiji deployed 130 troops and Georgia deployed 691 troops. There was also concern over the vote monitoring process. Canada led the “International Mission for Iraq Elections” consisting of 25 members from eleven countries to monitor the Iraqi election. However, the mission was based in Jordan and was limited to assessing Iraq’s voting procedures. About 50,000 Iraqi citizens helped the mission in election monitoring. Another 129 foreign observers mainly foreign diplomats posted to Iraq also did some monitoring from Baghdad’s protected “Green Zone.”

**US Financial Assistance:**

The Bush Administration assisted Iraq in the election process, and other election-related functions. The Iraqi government budgeted about $250 million for the election expenditure inside Iraq, of which $130 million was to be offset by international donors. About $40 million came from the European Union (Katzman 2005). Out of $18.6 billion appropriated for Iraq reconstruction, the United States provided $40 million to improve the capacity of the IECI, $42.5 million for election monitoring and $40 million for political party development, through the International Republican Institute and National Democratic Institute (Katzman...
These funds were apportioned from $832 million provided by the supplemental for “democracy and governance” for FY2004 (Katzman 2005). No US funds were spent for the out of country voting.

**Major Political Players:**

The Iraqi groups that took the most active interest in the elections were primarily those parties, which appeared best positioned to win seats. They were Shiite Islamist parties, the Kurds, and other established secular parties. A total of 111 entities were on the National Assembly ballot, 9 of them were multi-party coalitions, 75 were single political parties, and 27 were independents. More than 7,000 candidates contested for the national legislature. Another 9,000 candidates contested in the provincial elections including in Kurdish area.

The most prominent coalition, the “United Iraqi Alliance” (UIA), was brokered by Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Husaini al-Sistani and his top aids, including former nuclear scientist Hussein Shahristani. Ayatollah Sistani himself, who is Iraq’s supreme Shiite leader, was not a candidate. The 228 candidates consisted of 22 parties, clearly dominated by two large Shiite Islamist parties, the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) and the Da’wa Party (BBC 2006). Both, but particularly SCIRI, were considered politically close to Tehran. The first candidate on the UIA coalition was SCIRI leader Abd al-Aziz al-Hakim, who was in exile in Iran during the 1980s-1990s. Da’wa leader Ibrahim Jafari, Vice President, was number seven. In the tenth position was secular Shiite Ahmad Chalabi, a former US ally who has aligned his secular Iraqi National Congress (INC) with the Islamist Shiites. There were 14 supporters of radical young Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr on the list, but Sadr’s top aides, apparently with his backing, publicly denounced the election as an illegitimate product of the US occupation (BBC, 2006). In an effort to include all of Iraq’s various communities, the
UIA coalition included some non-Islamist Shiites, Sunni tribalists, and Turkoman and Yazidi ethnic and religious minority candidates. Pro-Sadr Shiites also formed a competing coalition, the National Independent Elites and Cadres (NIEC), had also competed in provincial elections (BBC 2006).

Other large coalition consisted of long-established parties. The two main Kurdish parties, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) put aside lingering rivalries to offer a joint 165-candidate list “Kurdish Alliance”. Prime Minister Iyad al-Allawi filed a six-party, 233-candidate coalition “the Iraqi List” led by his Iraqi National Accord (INA) party (BBC 2006). His list included tribal leaders and some secular Sunni and Shiite independents. The Communist Party, headed by former Iraq Governing Council (IGC) member Hamid al-Musa, filed a 257-candidate coalition called the “People’s Union.” Smaller parties that included both Sunnis and Shiites also participated.

Some Sunni-based parties participated in the election, but others did not. An 80-candidate coalition was offered by President Ghazi al-Yawar, a Sunni tribal figure that formed the “Iraqis Party” (BBC 2006). Adnan Pachachi, a Sunni elder statesman who was head of the Iraqi Independent Democrats, offered a list consisting mostly of professionals. A pro-monarchist coalition of the Movement for Constitutional Monarchy (MCM) was mostly Sunni as well. A moderate Islamist group, the Iraqi Islamic Party of former Governing Council member Muhsin Abd al-Hamid, filed a 275-seat list, but it withdrew from the election in December 2004. The Iraqi Muslim Clerics’ Association, which is said to be close to the insurgents, did not compete and called for a Sunni boycott. Some Sunni groups who boycotted the National Assembly contest nonetheless participated in the provincial assembly elections.

**Parties and Coalitions:**
The deadline for registration closed on October 28, 2005. The Electoral Commission announced that 228 lists had been registered; including 21 coalitions (Government of Iraq 2006). The emerging Iraqi political scene was marked by established parties running on joint lists, often grouped on sectarian or ethnic grounds. These lists were not stable, as the parties sharing a list had past or present rivals; the situation became even more complicated for the December 2005 election because parties could form different alliances in different governorates. The landscape was fluid; what follows was a list of some of the more important parties and coalitions, with a focus on alliances that had shifted since the January 2005 election.

**United Iraqi Alliance:**

This coalition, dominated by Shiite parties, was formed to contest the January 2005 election with the blessing of Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, the most senior Shiite cleric based in Iraq. It won the most votes in that election and became the senior partner in the coalition government that ran Iraq for most of 2005. The UIA’s main components were the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) led by Abdul Aziz al-Hakim and the transitional Deputy President Adel Abdul Mahdi. The Islamic Da’wa Party led by transitional Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari. The Iraqi National Congress led by Ahmed Chalabi. The Islamic Virtue Party, which includes the Governor of Basra, Mohammed al-Waili. Iraqi Hezbollah led by former Iraqi Governing Council member Sheikh Abdel-Karim Mahoud al-Mohammedawi, who led the rebellion by the Marsh Arabs against Saddam Hussein. A number of independent politicians, including some supporters of Moqtada al-Sadr were also in this alliance.

In advance of the December 2005 elections, Moqtada al-Sadr’s party chose to join the Alliance. However, the Iraqi National Congress and Iraqi Hezbollah left the Alliance to form their own lists. In a blow to the Alliance, Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani
announced that he would not back any particular party for the election; he merely encouraged people to vote according to their beliefs. He is said to have been disappointed with the performance of the transitional government.

*The Kurdistan Alliance:*

This Kurdish dominated coalition was formed for the January 2005 election by the two main Kurdish parties i.e. the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Kurdish Autonomous Region, its President Masoud Barzani and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan of the transitional Iraqi President Jalal Talabani plus some other smaller parties. The KDPKAR formed a coalition government with the UIA in the wake of the January 2005 elections. This coalition contested in the December elections, but the smaller Kurdistan Islamic Union (KIU), who won 10 percent of the seats in the Dahuk and Sulaymaniyah governorate elections in January, had announced that it will form its own governmental lists.

*Iraqi National Accord:*

The [Iraqi National Accord](#) was established by Iyad Allawi, who served as interim Prime Minister before the January 2005 election, mostly dominated by his Iraqi National Accord party. For the December 2005 election, it had joined forces with former interim President Ghazi al-Yawar’s The Iraqis list, the People’s Union list, which was dominated by the Iraqi Communist Party, and the Sunni Arab politician Adnan Pachachi and his Assembly of Independent Democrats to form a single list called the Iraqi National List. This list attempted to present a secular and trans-community alternative to the other major lists, which were more based on the support of a single ethnic or religious groups.
**Iraqi Accord Front:**

The Iraqi Islamic Party originally registered for the January elections but then decided to boycott the polls, which meant that it did not gain any seats. It had decided to participate in the December elections, forming a list called the Iraqi Accord Front with two other smaller parties, the Iraqi Peoples’ Gathering and the Iraqi National Dialogue. These parties aimed to tap the Sunni Arab vote. Sunni Arabs overwhelmingly boycotted the January election, but increased Sunni participation in the constitutional referendum indicated an increased Sunni turnout for the December elections, because more than 1,000 Sunni clerics called on their followers to vote. However, the Association of Muslim Scholars in Iraq, which is influential in the Sunni community, had called for a boycott of the December elections, which could have an adverse impact on the success of Iraqi Accord Front. Apart from these coalitions a host of several other political parties contested the election both at the national and provincial levels. A list of these political parties has been included in Appendix-I.

**Election Results:**

The voting itself was conducted relatively smoothly. Insurgents conducted about 160 attacks, killing about 30 Iraqis, but no polling stations were overrun and Shiite and Kurdish voters appeared mostly undeterred. Total turnout was about 58% which is about 8.5 million votes in 5,216 polling centers. More than 265,000 Iraqis participated in the Out-of-Country Voting (OCV) program, held in 14 countries worldwide. This figure represents nearly 94% of those who registered to vote outside of Iraq (Department of State 2005). Most of the election observers were satisfied the way Iraq election was conducted. Experiencing this democratic process overwhelmed many Iraqis. After the polls closed, President Bush said, “In great numbers and under great risk, Iraqis have shown their commitment to democracy...
The Iraqi people, themselves, made this election a resounding success” (Katzman 2005). The members of the US Congress widely praised the vote. World reaction was favorable, including from governments of France and Germany, which earlier were critical of the US policy towards Iraq.

After the rigorous exercise of election in Iraq the uncertified results were released by the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq on January 20, 2006. The much awaited final certified results were announced, after the adjudication of appeals and after the lists had submitted the names of people who would take the seats (Government of Iraq 2006). The details of this election results can be seen in Appendix-II. The UN Representative Ashraf Qazi welcomed the result and said, “I urge the political leaders to quickly form the new government and offer stability and security to Iraq” (BBC, 2006).

National Assembly results appeared to match many predictions. In provincial elections, the Kurds won about 60% of the seats in Tamim (Kirkuk) province got 26 out of 41 seats; Sunni Arabs held 6 and Turkomens held 9 seats. This result strengthened Kurdish attempts to gain control of oil-rich city Kirkuk and provoked some Arab and Turkmen backlash. In a result that could divide the Shiite Islamists, Pro-Sadr candidates won pluralities or majorities in several Shiite provinces, including Wasit, Dhi Qar, and Maysan, while SCIRI, running separately won in Najaf, Karbala, Qadisiyah, and Muthana provinces.

Post-Election Bargaining:

The election results triggered intensive factional bargaining over positions in the new transition government and the future direction of Iraq. On the strength of its showing, the UIA had insisted, that one of its leaders become prime minister; and that post would have executive power in this transition government. The bloc had named Da’wa leader Ibrahim Jafari as its choice. The Kurds, based on their strong
results, insisted that PUK leader Jalal Talabani should be the president. However, even more important to the Kurds than Jalal Talabani, are guarantees that they would have substantial autonomy and control over resources. They would be able to incorporate the oil rich city of Kirkuk, which has a large Kurdish population, into the Kurdish-administered areas in northern Iraq. These demands formed the basis of hard bargaining between the Kurds and the UIA for a few weeks, but the two groups reached a tentative agreement on these issues that enabled them to form a government shortly after the transitional Assembly met on March 16. However, the agreement appeared to be preliminary, and there were differences over the number of other senior positions allotted to each bloc, and to the Sunni Arabs, as well as the firmness of UIA promises to meet Kurdish demands. The UIA leaders had agreed to discussions or to a process of consensus decision-making on such issues as the status of Kirkuk; some Kurd leaders wanted concrete promises of the outcome before finalizing any agreement with the UIA.

A key issue was the disposition of the Sunni Arabs, who held very few seats in the new Assembly. Most US officials appeared to believe that the elections would have a lasting positive effect if Sunni Arabs entered the new power structure. UIA and Kurdish leaders said they would include Sunni Arabs in the cabinet posts and in the committee that would draft the permanent constitution. Some reports said Sunnis could get at least one of the major ministries, such as defense, interior, oil, or finance. UIA leaders had also said they would not try to establish a state run by clerics and Islamic law. Some major Sunni organizations, including the Iraqi Islamic Party, and to a lesser extent, the Iraqi Muslim Clerics Association (MCA) expressed interest in the constitutional drafting process. However, the MCA had set firm conditions for its participation, including a timetable for the US withdrawal, a condition which unlikely to be met. Stability
would be difficult to achieve if major Sunni organizations would not come into the power structure; the Sunni-led insurgency remained at roughly pre-election levels, and it was increasingly targeting Shiite civilians, possibly as retribution for the Shiites’ new place at the apex of Iraq’s post-Saddam power structure (Weinstein, 2006).

**Impact and Expectations:**

The election had a significant impact on the politics of Iraq. The election for a sovereign government with a legislature with four-year tenure is an important achievement. The election witnessed only limited violence, and the overall turn out was impressive. Everything depended on whether this success could be turned into a more lasting political process. Voting takes only a matter of minutes, but creating an effective government and functioning political system takes months to start, and years to complete. The Iraqi election can only be successful if Iraqi politics and governance are successful, and move towards unifying the country and ending support for the insurgency.

**Reactions in the United States:**

For President Bush, the strong voters turnout in Iraq’s election represented the best day since the fall of Baghdad because all major factions participated in the political process. But the sobering reality was that the vote by itself did not resolve Iraq’s lingering political disputes. After a prolonged debate in the United States that helped sink the president’s approval rating to an all-time low, the Bush Administration appeared buoyed by the throngs at the polls and the low violence. Six young Iraqis, all with a purple-stained finger flanked in the Oval Office signified that they had voted as Out-of-Country (OCV) voters. President Bush called the election a “major milestone” on the road to democracy (Chomsky 2006). In his congratulatory speech he said, “Today the people of Iraq have spoken to the
world, and the world is hearing the voice of freedom from the center of the Middle East… There’s more distance to travel on the road to democracy. Yet Iraqis are proving they’re equal to the challenge. On behalf of the American people, I congratulate the people of Iraq on this great and historic achievement” (Bush 2005).

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said, “We’re hearing that this is a remarkable day for the Iraqi people, that across the country, despite the intimidation, despite the threats of Zarqawi, who literally took on democracy directly, that the Iraqi people are turning out in large numbers to vote, that they are jubilant at this opportunity to vote… This election is, of course, a first step, and what it really says is that the Iraqi people are not prepared to be fearful and intimidated and kept from their right to exercise their voice” (Threse 2005).

In Baghdad for Election Day, Republican Sen. Lindsey O. Graham said, “I am encouraged by what I saw, but it was only a step toward building a stable democracy in Iraq, and more help is needed from the international community… Let’s don’t take this election to mean the problems in Iraq are solved. Really in many ways they’re just beginning.” The vote provided a second chance, but he also warned that the successful day should not be interpreted as a solution to Iraq’s problems.

Anthony H. Cordesman, a Persian Gulf military expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies said, “The vote is not the long-awaited turning point but rather a trigger for launching a new political process next year that will include amending a constitution. That will better determine whether Iraq has a chance of emerging out of turmoil” (Cordesman 2006).

Henri J. Barkey, a former State Department Iraq policy planning expert, at Lehigh University, said, “It’s the best moment since Baghdad fell… but it’s at least
18 months late. The fall of Saddam Hussein was a moment. This is just a moment of relief” (Wright 2005).

Although Democrats expressed hope that the election marked the beginning of a healing process in Iraq, some called for it to be made a catalyst for policy adjustments. In a letter to the White House, 26 Democrats of the House of Representative, including the minority whip and nine members of the Armed Services Committee outlined principles that they said should guide US policy after the election, including a significant drawdown of US troops in the next 12 months and the transfer of key nation-building responsibilities to Iraq’s neighbors and the international community.

**Criticism:**

There were others who assessed the new democratic processes in Iraq with a critical eye. One view predicted that the looming danger of insurgency, and the violence by the foreign fighters and Islamic extremists, could become more vicious. Juan R.I. Cole, an Iraq expert at the University of Michigan warned, “The steady grind of this guerrilla war is going to go on. The elections are not relevant to it, and that’s what is going to matter to the American people” (Cole 2007).

Another view was President Bush’s characterization of Iraq Election is a triumph of democracy over terror and a “resounding success.” But under the Vienna Convention, an occupying force has no right to change composition of occupied territories socially, culturally, educationally or politically (Arbuthnot 2005).

A third view found out that stringent security measures by the Coalition Forces left Iraq’s cities looking like ghost cities. The ballot papers were so complicated that even Jalal Talabani, the Kurdish leader, needed a briefing on how
to use one. Most candidates had been afraid to be seen in public, or to link their names to their faces in the media. The United Iraqi Alliance, identifying only 37 of their 225 candidates, explained, “We offer apologies for not mentioning the names of all the candidates... We have to keep them alive” (Leone 2005).

Critics also pointed out the rationale behind President Bush’s policy of democratizing Iraq. Early in the occupation, the Bush Administration recognized that a democratic Iraq would not countenance the America’s strategic goals for controlling the oil reserves and establishing military bases. Even as the US proclaimed its mission as promoting democracy in Iraq, the neocons worked to make sure that the processes they put in place would produce leaders they had picked. The US obtained a carefully circumscribed UN involvement in order to provide the chosen leaders a measure of legitimacy. In its search for greater legitimacy for its preferred Iraqi leadership, the US avoided the UN Security Council, since most of its members abhor what was being done to Iraq. The US had instead chosen to work with elected individual representatives for the future of Iraq. However, President George Bush said, “Freedom, by its nature, must be chosen, and defended by its citizens” (Department of State 2007).

According to the spokesperson of the Association of Muslim Scholars in Iraq, “The election was carried out in the absence of international supervision and under occupation. Only persons with vested interests were supervising the political process, a move that is not logically and scientifically accepted... For the sake of those people who voted, we respect their choice, and will deal with the new government. Yet we know it lacks authority, does not diplomatically represent Iraq, and does not have the right or legitimacy to draw up a permanent constitution and enter in or ratify agreements” (Al-Faydhi 2007).
With the fall of Saddam Hussein’s regime, politicians, pundits, and scholars had turned their attention toward the task of political reconstruction in Iraq. Former Secretary of State Colin Powell desired to see “the day when a democratic, representative government at peace with its neighbors leads Iraq to rejoin the family of nations,” and President Bush personally expressed the belief that democracy could flourish in Iraq in the wake of US invasion (Lawson & Thacker 2007). Even more ambitiously, other administration officials have suggested that regime change in Iraq could trigger reform across the Arab world, with a newly democratic Iraq serving as a model for other countries in the region.

Such arguments about the potential democratization of Iraq had been accompanied by references to the postwar reconstruction of Germany and Japan, which occupation forces effectively turned into liberal-democratic allies of the United States. From this point of view, Iraq was either ready for democracy now or could be made so relatively rapidly under US guidance. Skeptics had drawn parallels to recent failures of nation building in Afghanistan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Haiti, Kosovo, Somalia, and elsewhere. From their perspective, US efforts to promote democracy in Iraq were doomed to failure.

It was argued that Iraq was unlikely to sustain democratic institutions, even given protracted US occupation. According to Marina Ottaway, “At this point in Iraq, you do not have a central government, so you do not have a legitimate authority running the country. You do not have a government with the power to establish or maintain order. What you have is a nominal government that can only stay in power because the Americans are there. The government is supposed to have derived legitimacy from the constitution and the elections. But I think the government we end up with, won’t have much legitimacy either” (Ottaway 2006). At the same time, it was argued that US efforts were not completely hopeless. A
series of measures adopted under American supervision during the occupation would make democracy substantially more likely.

Claiming that building democracy in Iraq, after the US led war to depose Saddam Hussein would be easy or certain, would not be realistic. Nevertheless, the arguments advanced by skeptics exaggerated the impediments to building democracy and ignore the potential impact that a determined United States could have on this effort. Iraq was hardly ideal soil for growing democracy, but it was not as infertile as other places where some kind of a democracy has taken root. Iraq’s people are literate, and the country’s potential wealth is considerable. A properly designed federal system stabilized by the US and other intervening powers’ military forces could both satisfy Iraq’s myriad communities and ensure order and security. Creating democracy in Iraq would require a long term US commitment, but the United States made similar commitments to far less strategic parts of the world. Creating a democracy in Iraq would not be quick, easy, or certain, but it should not be impossible either.

President George W. Bush himself declared, “The United States has no intention of determining the precise form of Iraq’s new government. That choice belongs to the Iraqi people. Yet, we will ensure that one brutal dictator is not replaced by another. All Iraqis must have a voice in the new government, and all citizens must have their rights protected” (Bush 2003). As members of a prosperous democratic society, American citizens innately believed that democracy would be good for Iraqis too. The most optimistic had even offered a vision of a future Iraq as a ‘City on the Hill’ for the Arab world that would inspire democracy throughout the Middle East and beyond (Fallows 2002).

The capture of Saddam Hussein was an important psychological victory for the United States and the Iraqi people. As long as he remained at large he was a
rallying point for many of those opposed to the US presence in Iraq, and at least a source of inspiration for many of the attacks being carried out by the Iraqi insurgents. His capture led to the closing of a terrible chapter in the history of Iraq. However, it was not necessarily mean that the US led reconstruction of Iraq was sure to succeed. Saddam was never the major impediment to either its success or a major source of its problems. Indeed, the same could be said of the insurgency in general, which remained more of a nuisance than a true threat. Ultimately, there are far greater problems in Iraq than Saddam Hussein or the anti-American insurgents. Adam Garfinkle, therefore, argues that trying to build democracy in the Arab world would not only fail but also further stoke anti-Americanism in the process (Barro 1999).

There had been much good happening in Iraq, and many positive developments since the “end of major combat operations.” In April 2003 Iraq was eminently feasible for the US led reconstruction to produce a stable, prosperous and pluralist Iraq over the course of 5 to 15 years. Yet there were also many problems with the current course of US policy, strategy, and tactics in Iraq that had threatened to undermine the positives. If the negatives were not remedied, they could have permanently crippled the course of the reconstruction measures, making the best possible scenario impossible and raising the specter that Iraq might instead slide into a disaster.

The Bright Side:

Iraqi public opinion was in favor of reconstruction. There were certainly Iraqis who hated the United States and wanted American and their coalition friends out of their country as quickly as possible. There were others who were delighted to have the United States in Iraq. However, the vast majority of Iraqis inclined to see the US as a necessary evil. The US may not prefer exactly this response, but this was
perfectly adequate for its purposes. In numerous opinion polls, Iraqis expressed some variant of the following sentiment: “We really wish you weren’t here occupying our country but please don’t leave. If you leave, there will be civil war.” Other American officials, military personnel, journalists, and aid workers in Iraq, as well as many other Iraqis agreed that this was the majority attitude throughout the country. Indeed, a study of Iraqi public opinion by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) found the same, reporting the view expressed by a former secretary general of the Iraqi Communist Party that, “If the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) were to withdraw from Iraq, there would be a civil war and democrats would have no chance” (NDI 2003).

Indeed, the fear that the withdrawal of US troops would lead to a quick descent into civil war was substantial throughout the country. When Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld announced plans to draw down US forces in Iraq by 30,000 troops, it caused a virtual panic among many Iraqis. The fear that a US withdrawal would lead to civil war was a constant theme in Iraqi conversations about the occupation that, “If the Americans are not here, everyone will kill one another” (Melia & Katulis 2003).

These fears also had a disconcerting basis in truth. Just beneath the surface in Iraq, it was easy to discern the forces of chaos and lethal violence waiting. Many local militias fiercely guarded their patches of territory, and other militias were forming. Muqtada al-Sadr formed a particularly strong militia in Sadr City in Baghdad. Various other Shiite militias control different southern cities just as Sunni militias control certain towns in western Iraq and the Kurds maintain their control of the far north. Many Iraqis expressed growing anxiety because their leaders were beginning to talk about the need to take matters into their own hands, which they saw as being the start of a process of disintegration.
Ironically, it was this fear of civil war that was the greatest impetus to continue Iraqi popular support for the US presence to date. In this context, the positive efforts of the US led Coalition to help Iraqis build a new and better Iraq undertook a secondary importance. Most Iraqi leaders remained patient. At the top of the Iraqi political pyramid, most of the country’s surviving leaders of religious figures, tribal chiefs, the Kurdish leaders, and a small number of others remain largely committed to the US reconstruction process. Particularly among the leading Shiite clerics like Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani, Hussein al-Sadr, Abd al-Aziz al-Hakim, and other members of the Shiite Hawza, there remained a strong conviction on US effort. They assumed that if the American led process could work, this was Iraq’s best chance to avoid civil war. In this way they could build a strong, independent new country in which its majority Shiite population would finally have political weight equivalent to their demographic presence. Similarly, the Kurdish leaders also remained committed to the US led process as the most likely opportunity to produce a democratic Iraq in which Kurds will not be oppressed and will enjoy considerable autonomy, even though the details of that status remain contentious (Weisman 2004).

Of course, not all of Iraq’s leaders were committed to this process. Certainly many Sunni tribal chiefs were deeply opposed to the US occupation. Similarly, a smaller number of religious figures, particularly Shiite religious figures such as Muqtada al-Sadr, continued to rail against the US presence. The Sunni tribal leaders were influential with their followers, but these were only a tiny percentage of the total population. Probably as a result, al-Sadr had toned down his rhetoric. Although, he continued to actively recruited and expanded areas under his control in expectation that at some point the US would withdraw or lose control and he would then be able to reassert himself.
The majority of Iraq’s leaders, those who managed to survive Saddam’s brutal, decapitating reign, have been willing to cooperate with the American CPA, if only clandestinely. So far, these leaders indeed most Iraqis have demonstrated a remarkable degree of patience with the American method of reconstruction. Though, US had not delivered basic security or services anywhere near the momentum that they and their followers desired. Of course, it was unlikely that their patience would endure forever. There were hints of this in Baghdad in November 2003 (Berenson 2003). Most of the insurgents were neither very capable nor very committed. The American military officers in Iraq note that, the foe they face is not a terribly formidable one. By and large, the insurgency was not an obstacle to reconstruction.

It was hard to know precisely who was attacking the US forces. Although, American military officials believed that it was principally former members of Saddam’s regime, including former Special Security Organization and Special Republican Guard personnel. There was also believed to be a contingent of foreigners, mostly associated with Al-Qaeda and other Salafi Jihadist groups. Finally, some of those attacking the US forces were undoubtedly independent Sunni and Shiite fundamentalists who had their own reasons for hating the Americans. Although, these appeared to be the smallest contingent. In short, there was a wide range of people seeking to undermine the American presence through violence in Iraq. According to Donald Rumsfeld, “The Iraqi people who had suffered through decades of brutality and corruption understand the high stakes in this war. They are determined to claim their birthright of freedom and secure their new democracy. In defiance of violence, they have elected a provisional government, drafted a Constitution, ratified it through popular referendum and
elected a permanent government with millions more Iraqis participating in the process at each new stage.” (Rumsfeld 2006).

American military personnel stress that the threat posed by the insurgents is generally quite modest (Pollack 2004). Coalition forces continued to suffer about 20-30 attacks per day. In short, they were not determined attacks by insurgents, willing to die for their cause, nor were they always very skillfully conducted. The attackers generally placed a premium on their survival, not on killing Americans. As a result, most of the attacks do little damage, and the United States continues to suffer only an average of about 1-2 dead per day (Pollack 2004).

Thus, overall, US military personnel contend that most of the insurgents were not very committed to their cause, and not very competent at what they do. The small numbers that were willing to die for a cause appeared to be mostly foreigners. They were often resented by the Iraqi population, and therefore could be neutralized by convincing the domestic population to denounce these foreign fighters. Possibly the greatest concern for many American military personnel confronting the insurgency was that the daily toll of American dead and wounded would erode domestic political support for the mission. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld had the following encouraging words for the American troop in Iraq, “You serve in a military dedicated not to conquest, but to preserving freedom. It is a military that is recognized and appreciated by your fellow citizens. So know that wherever you go, you can always carry with you a little bit of home” (Rumsfeld 2006).

Local Successes:

It is important to mention the numerous successes achieved by the US military and to a lesser extent civilian personnel in various parts of Iraq. American military civil affairs personnel, USAID and State Department officials, contractors, and members
of non-governmental organizations had spread out into many Iraqi villages and neighborhoods. In virtually every place, their presence appeared to have had something of the Midas touch. They had built schools, restored bridges, and repaired hospitals, cleaned out irrigation ditches, dug sewers, and a host of other activities. They formed local councils and had given them decision-making authority regarding local political and economic activities. They created new police and security forces and helped find local magistrates from judges to mayors to police chiefs. In a very real sense, they were the ones helping the Iraqis to rebuild their political, economic, and social systems from the ground up, the only way that it could work.

Roughly 1,000 grants for building road or bridge or school or whatever, had been provided to the nearly 250 local governing councils and most have brought immediate benefits to the Iraqis who received them (USAID 2007). The project brought some positive changes in the lives of a large number of ordinary Iraqis, and had let the average Iraqi see tangible results from the fall of Saddam Hussein’s regime. However, there were enormous problems that griped the Iraqis. Large parts of Iraq were without clean water. The Pentagon had estimated that 50 percent of Iraqis still do not have access to clean water (Department of Defense 2003). Although Iraq has the second largest proven oil reserves in the world, there had been severe shortfalls in the production of gasoline and kerosene (Department of Defense 2003).

Despite these problems, Iraqis found that in a society that was used to taking orders from the capital to do anything, this program had begun to encourage them to look to their own local leaders on their governing councils when they have a public problem that needed to be fixed. This program had not only put resources directly into the hands of the people. They were people who need them and could
best use them. It had also helped to decentralize power and build an understanding of pluralism. It instilled the notion that people should decide matters for themselves and look to local government rather than expecting everything to come directly from the capital.

Of course, there were dark clouds lingering over virtually every aspect of these successes as well. For instance, overall there was a desperate shortage of personnel, resources, and attention supporting these local initiatives. These troubles threatened to undo much of the good work that was being done by American military and civilian officials to restore law and order.

**Fantasy of Iraqification:**

The fall of Saddam produced the same kind of power vacuum in Iraq that the death of Tito did in Yugoslavia. Not surprisingly, it produced a similar state of lawlessness in Iraq. And the United States had not adequately filled that vacuum. Part of that failure lied in the size of the US force in Iraq. There were not enough American led Coalition troops in Iraq and particularly not enough infantry. Civil affairs personnel, and military police were needed to provide security. Providing adequate security for a country of 25 million people was a massive task. Military analyst James T. Quinlivan of the RAND Corporation was of the view that stabilizing a country requires about 20 security personnel per thousand inhabitants. In his words, “The objective is not to destroy an enemy but to provide security for residents so that they have enough confidence to manage their daily affairs and to support a government authority of their own” (Quinlivan 2003). For Iraq, with a population of nearly 25 million, that would require a total security force of nearly 500,000. However, the US had approximately 152,000 troops there and the 32 Coalition allies had so far provided another 24,000 producing a ratio of barely seven security personnel per thousand Iraqis (Department of Defense 2003). What’s
more, as noted above, most of these troops were not even trying to conduct basic security operations. They either remained in their cantonments or came out only for mounted patrols or raids against suspected insurgents.

This problem was not a new one. Throughout the 1990s, in postwar stability operations, the solution was to create a multilateral force that would fill the needed gap in troops until local forces could be trained. However, the Bush Administration resisted allowing the United Nations to play a leading role in the reconstruction of Iraq. This had created more difficulty to secure commitments from the countries most able to furnish large number of troops to stabilizing Iraq. France, Germany, Russia, India, Pakistan, and a host of other nations have refused to commit the tens of thousands of troops that would be needed to bring real security to Iraq.

Rather than accepting a larger international role, the Bush Administration’s answer was ‘Iraqification,’ which means turning over both more political power and security responsibilities to the Iraqis themselves. The idea that “the Iraqis need to do this for themselves” was not incorrect, but premature. The Iraqis lacked the capacity to do so, both in terms of their training and political acumen.

Consequently, the Bush Administration intended to do it for the Iraqis until they were ready to do it for themselves. Over time, the burden could shift, but the US had taken much of that burden, especially in the security realm. According to an analyst, Failure of the United States to do so is allowing the same forces that drove Yugoslavia to chaos and civil war to threaten the same in Iraq, and the US determination to ignore the problem or to make it the problem of the Iraqis themselves is a “very bad answer” (Gerecht 2003).

However, when the Administration decided to solve its security problems through Iraqification, then it was pushed to increase the battalions in the same year. As a result, the recruits received greatly reduced training and did not get the
same kind of inculcation in the values and methods of a democratic military. Such values were needed to take what was once the most coup-prone and internally disruptive military in the Arab world and turned it into a guardian of Iraqi democracy. The recruits for the ICDC were to get 2-3 weeks of training before turning out on the streets. American military personnel and officials in Iraq were uniformly pessimistic about the ability of these forces to do their jobs.

Finally, there were real concerns about whether these forces could make the situation better. Many feared that the locally recruited ICDC personnel especially after only a few weeks of training could quickly become the base for new local militias. Because of their expected close working relationships with US troops, this problem seemed less worrisome. The real cause for alarm was the growing corruption in the Iraqi police, a problem that began after the departure of Bernard Kerrick, who had initially been appointed by the Bush Administration to build a new Iraqi police force. Because of the rushed manner in which the US Administration tried to create Iraqi security forces to demonstrate that it did not need either more American troops or internationalization of Iraqi reconstruction to bring in more troops from other countries, the vetting process had suffered (Whitelaw 2003).

As a result, this had proven particularly problematic among the Iraqi police, where many of the former policemen recalled had turned out to be “criminals” themselves. It had been alleged that Iraqi policemen are guilty of extortion, bribery, prolonged absences and often never showing up at all, kidnappings, rape, arson, assault, and even murder (Pollack 2003). This was not to say that there were any honest, hard-working, well-intentioned, and extremely brave Iraqi police officers. It can only be stated that there were also many felons and would-be felons were charged with keeping order in Iraq’s streets.
Fighting the Insurgency:

According to Stephen S. Biddle, “A classical ideological insurgency is a war of ideas in which a sub-national group is challenging the ideas by which the government runs the country. In this kind of war of ideas, you can in principle win by changing people’s ideas. Given that, the classical strategy for waging counter insurgency is oriented around winning hearts and minds” (Biddle 2007). Even within the narrow realm of the campaign against the insurgency, to which the United States devoted a disproportionate amount of effort, there was expectation for improvement.

Many American units continued to see the targets of the raids as enemies and treated them as such and turning them into enemies regardless of their feelings beforehand. Once again, the priority placed on force protection came at the expense of the larger mission of safety, psychological disposition, and dignity of Iraqis. In some cases, the wanted personnel might have been there at some point and fled, but in others no one in the house was guilty at all. Indeed, too often, the US forces were directed to raid a house or arrest a person by someone else who simply had a grudge against them and turned them to the Americans as a ‘Saddam loyalist’ to settle a personal score. These were exactly the same problems the US forces encountered in Vietnam and elsewhere. Of course, too often when the raid was over, they had become “criminal”.

As a result of some early decisions, the United States had completely alienated the vast majority of Iraqi Sunni tribesmen. This was neither a huge percentage of Iraq’s population, but it was nor insignificant. The Sunnis controlled a sizable chunk of Iraq’s territory, the so-called Sunni triangle west and northwest of Baghdad. Because they were so averse to the US presence, they had furnished a very receptive base of popular support for the various groups attacking the
American and other Coalition forces. Their opposition to the US presence and reconstruction effort did not necessarily have anything to do with love or support for Saddam Hussein (Burns 2003). To a great extent, it was a function of their total alienation from the political processes led by the Americans. To make matters worse, after forcing the tribal Sunnis out of the old government, the United States had largely excluded them from the new government. The question was how to deal with the unpleasant situation that had developed. The United States needed them to understand that in a system where the rule of law prevails they did not have to fear being oppressed by the majority Shi’ah. Secondly, they needed to be persuaded that while they no longer enjoy the privileged position they had under Saddam Hussein, they would not be worse off.

It was pointed out that the US should also help the Sunnis to develop new political institutions (Wong 2003). Here the need appeared to be even more pressing. The Sunnis’ principal political institution was the Ba’ath party and it had been proscribed, along with all of its senior members. There was a growing feeling that the United States had to revise its “arbitrary and draconian de-Ba’thification measures” to allow prominent Sunnis. Many Sunni tribal leaders should have been allowed to participate in Iraq’s political process. US had to help the Sunnis to create new, progressive political institutions that would allow their voices to be heard. After all, insurgencies could not be defeated by military operations alone; they could be defeated by eliminating the underlying political and economic grievances. Overtly aggressive military operations were always counter-productive.

**Building New Iraqi Political System:**

It is important to address a few issues that continue to influence events in Iraq. Some Iraqi people appeared to prefer an Islamic theocracy like Iran’s to Western
democracy, and each ethnic and religious group would like to assert its rights in the creation of a new Iraq.

However, in a Zogby poll conducted with American Enterprise magazine in August 2003, Iraqi respondents were asked which foreign country they should model their new government on. The United States got the most 24%, while Iran got the fewest 3% (Zogby 2003). A Gallup Survey in Baghdad found that a multiparty parliamentary democracy was both the preferred form of government by 39% people and the form that was most acceptable to the respondents about 53% said that such a system would be acceptable to them. By comparison, an Islamic theocracy such as Iran’s was preferred by only 10%, and was acceptable to only 23% (Smeltz & Nachtwey 2003).

Indeed, even when polls found that the Iraqis were ambivalent when specifically asked about ‘democracy’, which often contains the connotation of Western culture, and not just a political system. They invariably found that the Iraqis were overwhelmingly positive when asked about specific aspects of a political system that Westerners would consider the cornerstones of democratic governance. For example, in October 2003, the US State Department conducted a poll in Baghdad, Basra, Fallujah, Ramadi, Irbil, Sulaymaniyyah, and Najaf. One of their principal conclusions was that, “In all seven cities in the Office of Research poll, large majorities’ support what are generally considered to be democratic values. Nine in ten think it is very or somewhat important that people vote in free and fair elections (95%), that people abide by the law and criminals are punished (94%), which people can criticize the government (86%), and that major nationality (89%) and religious groups share power (87%). Majorities also valued media that are independent of government censorship (78%) and rights for women that are equal to those of men (71%). There was very little, if any, variation among the cities
on these components, and there were only minor differences between men and women in their attitudes toward gender equity” (Department of State 2003).

Simultaneous, Iraqis did not want to divide their country up. They were aware of the difficulties of determining peacefully how to divide Iraq’s oil wealth or its huge mixed-population cities, like Baghdad, Mosul, and Kirkuk. Indeed, even the Kurds felt this way. Kurdish leaders were more blunt, indicating that even if they could somehow succeed in gaining their independence it would likely to be disastrous for them at this point. The NDI study asked its participants to choose from a list of words which one best described them: ‘Iraqi’; ‘Arab’ or ‘Kurd’ depending on the group; ‘Muslim’; their particular tribe; their family; and either ‘Sunni’, ‘Shiite’ or ‘Christian’ again depending on the group. The leading response, everywhere in the country was simply ‘Iraqi’ (Melia & Katulis 2003). The degree to which all Iraqis considered themselves to be part of an Iraqi collective was the most surprising of all of their findings given everything they had heard about Iraq before the war.

The November 15 Agreement:

As with the security question, the United States started off by making any number of mistakes with regard to the running of Iraq and the creation of a new political system. However, after many false starts, the CPA appeared to have come up with a feasible solution to move Iraq down a path toward stable new government. That is referred to as the “November 15 agreement,” because Chief Iraq Administrator L. Paul Bremer secured the consent of the current Iraqi Governing Council for this new program on that date. This was basically the agreement between the Coalition Provisional Authority and the Governing Council of Iraq, issued on 15 November 2003. It sets out the terms for restoration of Iraqi sovereignty by the end of June 2004. This agreement have five basic points, and they are: 1. The “Fundamental

The “November 15 Agreement” had received a lot of criticism in the beginning. In particular, many American correspondents characterized it as a way for the Bush Administration to allow the United States to declare victory and go home, dumping reconstruction efforts before the US presidential election. Because Jalal Talabani said, “If we need them, we will ask them to stay, if not, we will respectfully say: ‘Bye bye, dear friends, we are grateful to you for what you have done’” (Cullinan 2003). In fact, the US intention seemed to be a political framework that would allow the United States to remain in Iraq for the long term to guide the process of reconstruction, in a way that would be more efficient and more palatable to the Iraqis.

The United States had too much of a role in governing Iraq. American officials were making all of the important decisions, and often involved themselves in governance that would be better left to the Iraqis. It was humiliating and infuriating to the Iraqi people. Those without experience in the Middle East often underestimated the importance of honor and dignity in the Arab world. The Iraqis were fiercely nationalistic. They had resisted outside rulers since the days of the Ottoman Empire. At the most basic level, many Iraqis said that they understood the need for American presence and did not want the US to leave, but it was enraging and humiliating for them to see the Americans publicly exercising authority in Iraq. In particular, many Iraqi complained about the humiliation that this situation inflicted upon them. Iraq is a very different society from the United States, and it works in a very different fashion. And the Americans often do not know how to
make the system work, while the Iraqis do. Consequently, at the level of day-to-day administration, the American presence was often more of a hindrance than help.

Moreover, there were inadequate number of Americans and other Coalition personnel in Iraq to run the country on a day-to-day basis. The CPA had only 1,300 people and is trying to run a country of 25 million. The CPA has never had enough personnel, but in the beginning this shortage was felt less because the things they were trying to accomplish were limited and focused on only the most important projects. Only the Iraqis themselves could provide the tens of thousands of middle and low ranking officials for any kind of undertaking.

Even the Iraqi Governing Council was not the answer. This group was pulled together during the summer of 2003 and had proven to be mostly a liability. Most Iraqis did not know the majority of its members, and disliked some. In the State Department poll conducted in late August and early September, only seven of the 25 members of the IGC were known well enough by more than 40 percent of the population to have an opinion about them. Of those seven, Ahmed Chalabi was the only one whose unfavorable rating was higher than his favorable rating 35% to 26% (Smeltz & Nachtwey 2003: 8). In fact, this imbalance might have been increased considerably since then (Brinkley & Jehl 2003).

American officials reported similar sentiments among the Iraqis they dealt with, and contrasted Chalabi’s behavior making little effort to build a popular base of support. Instead he was attempting to use his connections in Washington to have himself appointed to ever-greater positions of authority. But the other IGC members who were diligently working to get to know their constituents and put themselves in position, tried to get elected by a genuine popular vote. Obviously, some elder statesmen appeared to have some degree of support with a number of
Iraqi demographic groups, but this did not confer legitimacy on the IGC as a whole.

Moreover, the presence in the IGC of so many exiles who lacked popular support created another problem. Observing this, the State Department poll asked its respondents who were the leader they trusted most; the overwhelming preference was for ‘Don’t Know/No Response,’ with 64%. Of those named, IGC member Ibrahim Jaafari topped the list with a mere 12%, followed by five other leaders including Saddam Hussein and the two Kurdish leaders who each garnered between 2% and 4% each. Several others, including Chalabi, Muqtada al-Sadr, and Sharif Ali bin al-Hussein, the pretender to the Hashemite throne of Iraq had no more than 1% (Smeltz and Nachtwey 2003: 14).

Given the history of failed states, the US could not afford Iraq to slip into chaos and civil war. The results would be catastrophic for the entire region that is vital to the interests of the United States and the economic health of the entire world. If the United States remained in Iraq, there was no guarantee that everything would work out well. But if it remained engaged while adjusting its policies and strategies, there is good reason to believe that a stable, prosperous, and pluralist Iraq can eventually be achieved.

**Assessment:**

Iraq has demonstrated a great deal of stability. Concerted efforts to launch popular rebellions have fallen flat. While Iraq’s road to democracy is anything but assured, Iraqis from a wide range of backgrounds appear determined not to revert back to dictatorship. The fracturing of Saddam Hussein’s security system may have made returning to dictatorship impossible. Many Iraqi political leaders recognize the futility of civil war to impose one ethnic or sectarian group’s will upon other Iraqi regions. Especially Kurds and Shi’a both are increasingly favoring regional
Many Arab Sunnis, even if they say they oppose the idea, nevertheless endorse its principles when they insist they do not want Kurds or Shi’a to govern their daily lives, respect the primacy of the rule of law. Iraqi political factions especially the predominantly Sunni Arab parties may feel themselves the losers in the new Iraq to uphold the rule of law. But it is essential that US policymakers do not pressure Iraqis to compromise or reach consensus. In politics and democracy, some factions win, others lose. So long as each has a chance to reverse their political fortunes through the ballot box, there should be no need to resort to violence. By responding to threats and seeking to impose a political solution to Iraq’s insurgency, US policymakers encouraged violence, enabled factions to augment their demands, and generally undercut Iraq’s political development.

Democracy not necessarily is forever a foreign concept in the Arab world. Culturally, Arabs are as capable of democracy as were Germans, Japanese, and Koreans. Defeating the insurgency can be tough; it may require a decade. There has been considerable political progress in Iraq, evident not only in the electoral and constitutional milestones, but also in the Iraqi willingness to compromise and complain. The project to build a democracy in Iraq is still young by historical standards. Furthermore, US foreign policy is never fully unified in motivation or execution. The efforts in Iraq have represented a mix of the various approaches, making it still more difficult to definitively determine their respective consequences. Despite numerous cases of both effective and abortive attempts of democratization in the last thirty years, there is a long way to go to have solid understanding of it. However, even if we do gain a deeper knowledge of the processes and mechanisms that lead to stable democracy, it is not clear that democratization will ever be any easier. Indeed, every stable democracy has experienced periods of wrenching social disruption and violence, and there are
good arguments as to why such agony may in fact be an integral part of democratization (Barrington, 1966). Paradoxically, it may be this relationship between democracy and violence that leaves us with the best reason to have hope for Iraq even if the experience so far has been bloody and violent, there is cause to believe that an Iraqi democracy may still eventually develop out of the current predicament.

One of the main strategies of authoritarian regimes is to undermine a society’s confidence in itself and, by extension, the hopes and aspirations of its citizenry. One of the most important defenses against the reassertion of authoritarian rule is to sustain the momentum of the ongoing transition to democracy. Iraqis can best accomplish this by remaining focused on the tasks at hand namely, expanding the number of projects that promote democratization and not allowing violence to deter them from their goals of building a democratic and just society. If the initiatives can help Iraqis, even in some small way, sustain the energy and enthusiasm that they have demonstrated in building democracy, then US has achieved its goal.